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ABSTRACT

Presenting American Indian legends, this material provides insight into the cultural background of the Dakota, Ojibwa, and Winnebago people. Written in a straightforward manner, each of the eight legends is associated with an Indian group. The legends included here are titled as follows: Minnesota is Minabozho's Land (Ojibwa); How We Got the Rainbow (an extension of the Ojibwa Minabozho legend); How the Birds Came to Have Their Many Colors (no tribal designation); The Story of Coyote and Moradjawinga (Earth Wanderer--a Winnebago legend); The Four Winds (Sioux); The Great Circle (Dakota); Legends of the Pipestone Quarry: The Three Maidens and The Dakota Buffalo Maiden Story (both Dakota). Each of the narratives includes complementary illustrations. A five-item bibliography is also included. (JC)

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INDIAN LEGENDS

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MINNESOTA IS MINABOZHO'S LAND
(Ojibwa)

It was an Indian named Minabozho who built Minnesota. In the beginning of time there was water everywhere and no land. Minabozho sat in the middle of the water, on a raft, with the animals, discussing what should be done.

The animals asked Minabozho to make some dry land so that, at times, they might come out of the water. It was decided that the animals who were the strongest swimmers should go to the bottom of the water to bring up some soil with which the land might be built.

First, the otter was sent down, and although he was gone a long time, he finally returned exhausted without having found the bottom below.

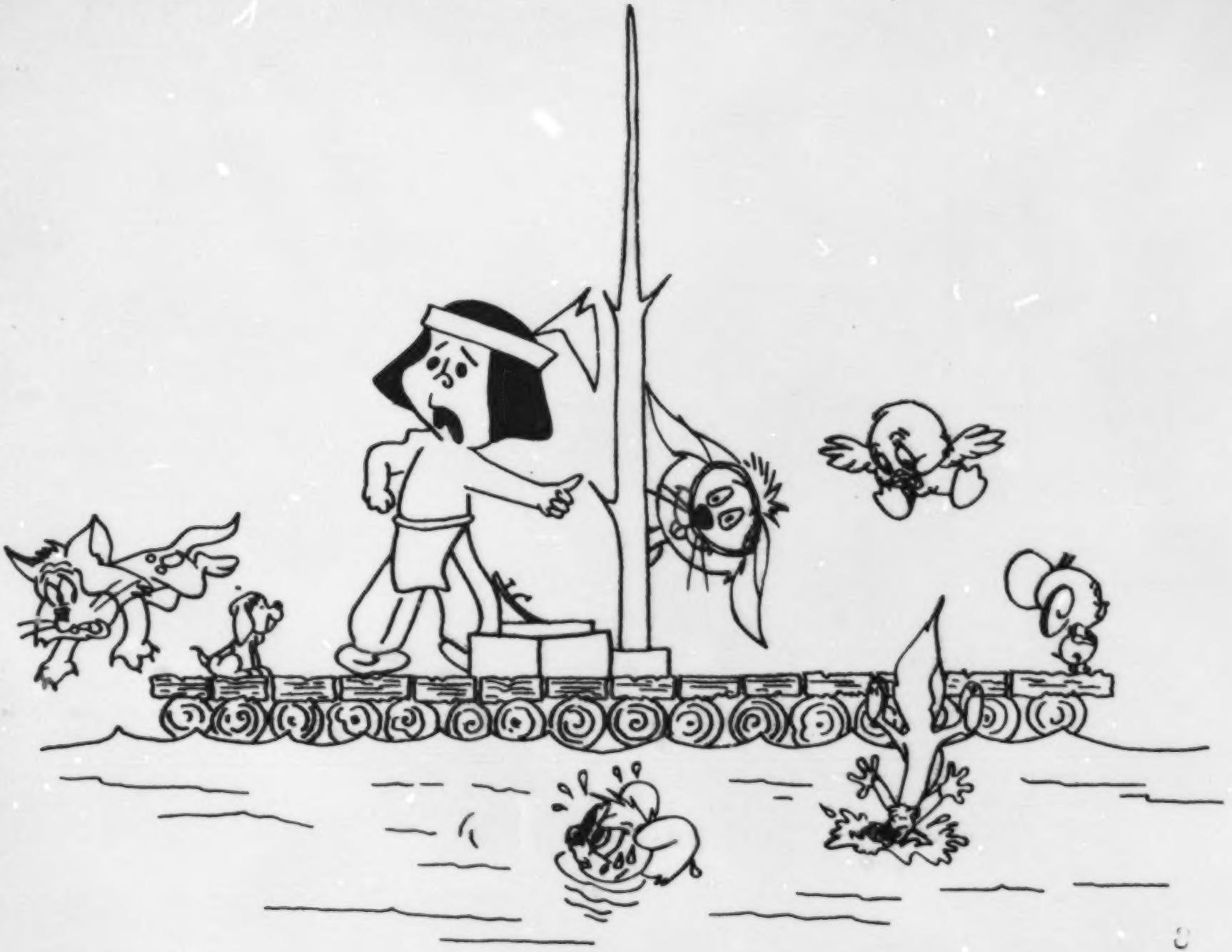
Then, the beaver tried, and he too, failed. Finally, the muskrat was sent and he remained under water for many moons. They thought he had drowned and had failed like the others. However, at last, he finally reappeared.

While the muskrat lay unconscious on the raft, a few grains of sand were noticed under one of his front paws. Minabozho took the precious grains and very carefully molded them into a tiny ball which he placed in the middle of the raft.

From time to time, he would look at the ball. The first two times he looked, it had not changed at all, but the third time it was a large round boulder, and the fourth time, it was a great land with high bluffs, and forests, with lakes and

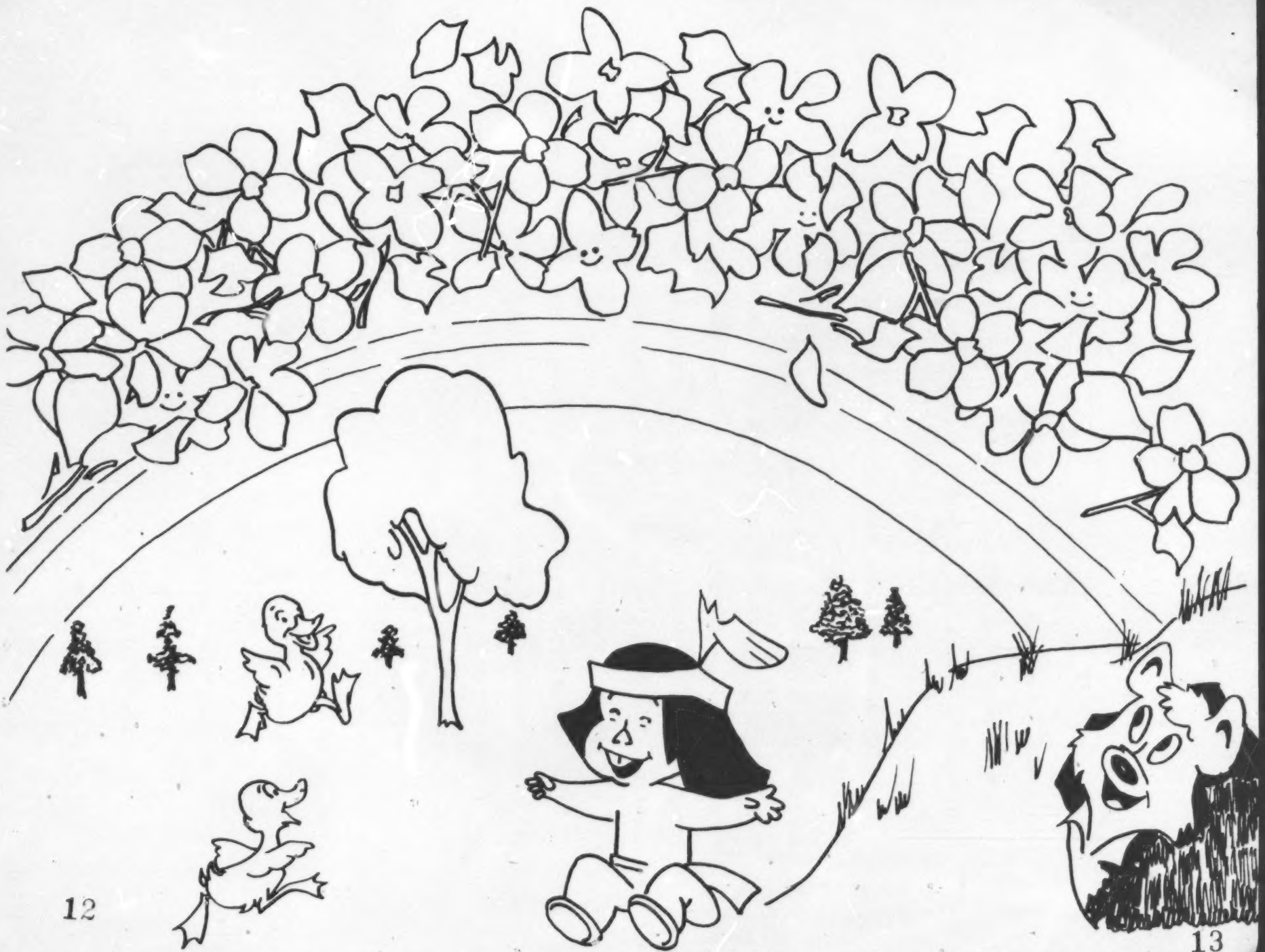
rivers running down to the sea. This was Minnesota, the land built by Minabozho.

Minabozho's land was favored land, abundantly endowed with the gifts of nature. Here were rich lands on which to grow food, and great wondrous forests and water, everything the Indian people and wildlife needed for survival and a happy life; MINABOZHO'S LAND—MINNESOTA!



HOW WE GOT THE RAINBOW

This happened when the earth was new. Minabozho was walking through the woods. He heard voices. The voices were not happy sounds. He began to look for the voices. He looked in the bushes. He looked around the trees. He looked up into the branches of the leafy trees for the birds and squirrels. He could not find where the sad little voices were coming from. As Minabozho walked, he looked upon the ground among the grasses. The voices sounded near. He looked at the flowers. He had found the voices. The flowers were crying. "Why do you cry?" Minabozho asked the Flowers. "Why should something so beautiful be so sad?" The Flowers said, "When winter comes, the animals all have homes to go to. The animals are warm and happy all winter. Many trees stay green all winter, and the birds and small animals build their winter homes in them, so they have company through the long cold nights but, the flowers all dry up and die." Minabozho walked on through the woods. He wanted to help the flowers. He prayed to Kijie Manito - the great one. Suddenly the skies became very dark. The thunder rolled across the skies and the lightning flashed in jagged lines around the black clouds. The skies opened up and water poured down upon the earth. When the great storm had passed the sky became blue again. Minabozho looked up at the sky and smiled. There were all the flowers in all their beautiful colors in a bridge across the sky. It was a gift from Kijie Manito, <u>the first rainbow</u>.



HOW THE BIRDS CAME TO HAVE THEIR MANY COLORS

In the days when all the birds lived together in one village, there was war between Raven and Grizzly Bear.

Raven called the birds. "Tomorrow we will fight Grizzly Bear. Today I will give a feast. Today we will dance the war dance."

Then Raven got out the pots of war paint and painted the birds. He painted stripes on the birds, and lines that were straight and lines that were sharp and jagged, and lines that made circles. He painted the birds with black and green and purple and yellow and red. He painted Mallard Duck and Baldpate Duck and Teal. Raven painted Nutcracker and Cedar Waxwing. He painted Warbler and he painted Robin's breast red and made him a war chief.

Raven hung a bear's-tooth necklace around the neck of Loon and gave a necklace to Harlequin Duck, and he fastened a fan of stiff feathers to the tail of Ruddy Duck. Raven tied up the hair of Bluejay and Kinglet and Willow Grouse.

The birds were ready for the feast. But Raven was greedy. "I have changed my mind," Raven said. "I shall eat all the feast myself. I am the one who will fight Grizzly Bear. Go away," Raven said. "I am not giving this feast to you."

The birds went away. They left the village where they had lived. Duck and Loon and the water birds went to the lakes and rivers, and sea beyond the mountains. All the birds left the Raven's village and went away to the lakes and the

forests and the plains and made new homes for themselves. They went away from Raven but they did not take off the paint. This is how the birds came to have their many colors.

WAR

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THE STORY OF COYOTE AND MORADJAWINGA (EARTH WANDERER)
(Winnebago)

Coyote was wandering about alone. He was wandering aimlessly, looking for food. He scented the air and ground with his nose as he walked, for he was very hungry. As he hunted from place to place he suddenly picked up a scent. "Ah! Ah!, if there are people nearby maybe they have thrown away bits of food and I shall be able to get some." So he started in the direction of the scent, and soon came to an abandoned village. He wandered through the village hoping to find a few grains of corn to take away his hunger.

In the distance he saw a rack and ran toward it eager to see what was there. As he came near he saw Morajawinga, the Earth Wanderer sitting on the top. Coyote said to himself, "Perhaps if I sit here quietly under this rack he will drop something down for me to eat." He was too weak from hunger to travel on, so began the long wait.

When night came on, Coyote was still waiting, and prepared to sleep under the rack. Suddenly Moradjawinga spoke, "What do you want? and why are you sleeping under my rack?" Coyote became frightened, but said to himself, "He has much magic, so I must not try to fool him." Coyote called up to Moradjawinga. "I am very hungry for dried corn boiled in bears' ribs." "Good said Moradjawinga, "Come and get it." Coyote sprang forward and there, to his surprise he found a plate of corn boiled with bears' ribs, and greedy Coyote ate every bit of the food,

and then lay down to sleep.

The next morning Moradjawinga spoke again to Coyote. "Why are you still here?" Coyote replied, "I am hungry and still too weak to travel, and would like jerked meat in bears' fat." So again Moradjawinga sent down the food he asked for, and greedy Coyote ate it all.

All winter Coyote lived under the rack, and every day Moradjawinga gave him food, because he felt sorry for the skinny Coyote. Coyote ate the best of foods. He ate corn boiled with fruit, watermelon, wild berries, squash, buffalo and every good food he had ever wished for.

Spring had now come. The grass was up, the wild prairie flowers in bloom and the days warm and sunny. Coyote went down to the river and looked at his reflection in the water. He liked what he saw. He was sleek and fat, his fur long and shiny. "How splendid I look," he said. "Now that I am strong, I will climb to the top of the rack and knock Moradjawinga off, and take away his magic. I will then go and become a great leader of the people."

Moradjawinga did not like what he heard. He called down to Coyote. "You are much too greedy to go and live in a village, I am coming down to teach you a lesson." "You will have to catch me first," called back the Coyote, and away he ran to hide in the forest.

Moradjawinga chased him day and night, but Coyote always

escaped. One night as Coyote lay sleeping in a hollow log, Moradjawinga sneaked upon him, grabbed his tail, and gave a big jerk, and broke the end off.

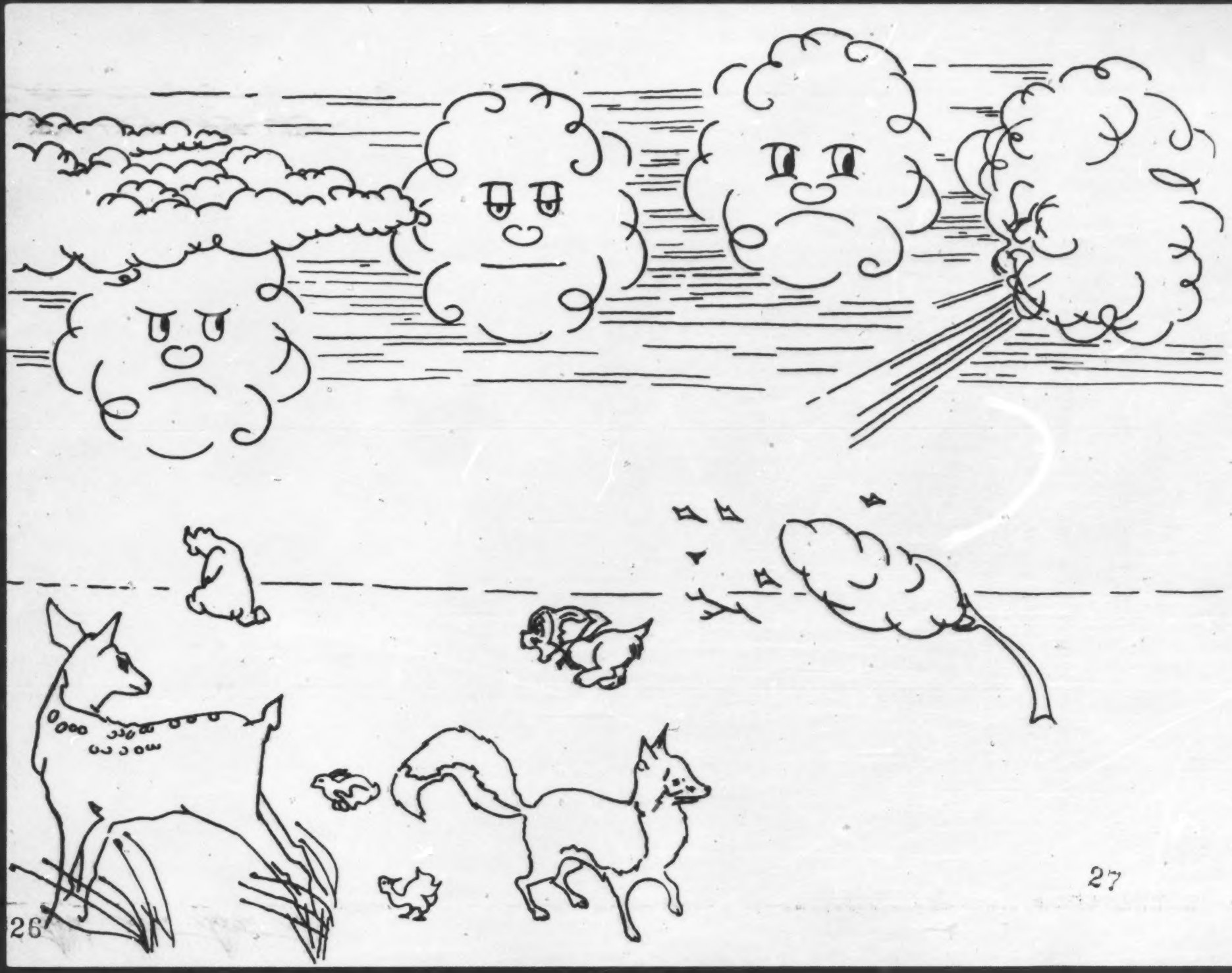
Coyote ran through the night screaming, "Help, help, Moradjawinga is trying to kill me, he has just bitten off my tail, Oh please won't someone help me?" The animals all came to see what had happened. They knew of Moradjawinga's magic and many were afraid to offer their help. The rabbit and bear offered to help, but could not help replace his tail, as theirs was already too short. Finally, the deer Chiakshigega, stepped forward and gave part of his tail to the Coyote.

Coyote was very proud of his new bushy tail as he ran through the woods he looked back again, and again to admire it. He then ran off to the woods to live with the animals. But from that day the tip of the Coyotes tail is white, and Chiakshigega the deer has a short tail.

THE FOUR WINDS
(A Sioux Legend)

Long, long ago the Sioux people still lived beneath the earth. There lived Wa-na-ka-ja-wi-cax-ta, The Old Man, and his wife, Wi-ni-hin-ca. Their first daughter grew to be a beautiful lady, and in time married Tote, who was the great and powerful Wind Spirit, (Ta-te-yan-pa). They went to live at the entrance of the Spirit Trail which led to the earth, where they could look out upon the new land. In time they had four sons, and named them, The West Wind, The North Wind, The South Wind, and The East Wind. Tote began to teach his sons about the new earth. Every day he sent them out, each son in a different direction, so they might learn to live with the people on the new land. North Wind, South Wind, and East Wind followed the teachings of their parents, and the people liked them. West Wind became loud and noisy. He would not play with his three brothers. He wandered far from home, and would not return until after darkness, when the Moon Spirit chased him out of the skies. While fathers and mothers were away gathering food he played tricks on small animals and birds. He put baby rabbits and squirrels into birds' nests, and baby birds into rabbit holes and squirrel nests, or hid them in the tall grasses. He ran through the fields knocking down the new corn plants, and snapping off the young tree branches. After many days of watching West Wind, Tote knew his oldest son would not be a brave and strong leader. Before

they were to go and live with the people on the new land Tote called his sons together for the last time. He took the leadership away from the West Wind and gave it to the North Wind. From that time on the order of the winds became: NORTH, SOUTH, EAST and WEST.



THE GREAT CIRCLE
(Dakota)

The circle was the beginning of everything for the Sioux people. They knew that Mah-pi-ya, the Sky, caused the world to be made in fours, with four kinds of spirits. Above the world were the Sun, the Moon, the Sky, and the Stars. There were four directions: West, North, East and South. Time was made up of four parts: day, night, month and year. There were four kinds of animals: crawling, flying, four-legged and two-legged. Finally, man's life was divided into four parts: infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age. The Shaman, (Medicine Man), taught the people to carry out their activities in fours.

Mah-pi-ya caused the world to be made into fours, so he caused it to be made into a circle. The sun, the moon, the earth, and the sky. The four winds circle the edge of the world. The bodies of animals, and the roots, stems and flowers of plants are round. The Great Circle was for the Sioux a sacred symbol and ruled the universe, the sun, time or directions depending on its particular form and color.

An old woman of honor keeps the circle alive in her daily work. Every morning she and her pet dog go to the top of the mountain. With her she takes a great white buffalo robe, her sewing awl and dyed porcupine quills to weave the history of the people on the robe. She builds her fire and sits down to weave. When she leaves her sewing to put wood on the dying fire, the dog goes over to the robe and pulls out the weaving.

Should she ever complete the circle the Great Sioux Nation would die.

LEGENDS OF THE PIPESTONE QUARRY
(Dakota)

Three large fragments of an old glacial boulder still guards the entrance to the Pipestone quarries in southern Minnesota. The Indian people tell many legends about the "Sacred Mountain of Red Stone." Following are two Sioux legends.

The Three Maidens

Three maidens went with a small band of warriors when they journeyed into battle. Arriving at the sacred quarry, they made camp by the water falls, and prepared to wait there making moccasins for the journey home. After many days of waiting, none of the braves returned from battle. The three maidens sought shelter under the red boulders. Today, amidst all the red rock in the quarry stand three large white boulders. These are the faithful maidens waiting for their braves to return.

Today, from tradition, Indians going into the quarry to dig the red catlinite stone from which the ceremonial pipes are carved, first stops to leave an offering of tobacco and food with the three maidens if they are to have good quarrying.

THE DAKOTA BUFFALO MAIDEN STORY
(Dakota)

An important legend is the White Buffalo Cow Maiden, who first gave the Sioux the ceremonial pipe, and taught them how to use it.

Two Sioux warriors on a hunt saw in the distance something white and shining coming toward them. They first thought it was a white buffalo calf. As it came nearer they saw a beautiful maiden dressed in white buckskin, and carrying a decorated ceremonial pipe. She asked the hunters to lead her to their village. She told the people that Wakan Tanka (The Great Spirit), was pleased with the Sioux, and she had come to live among the Buffalo People, as their sister. Because they had been good and faithful, they were chosen to receive the pipe. The pipe was a symbol of peace to all mankind, and should be used as such between men and nation. Smoking the pipe was to be a bond of good faith, and the sacred red mountain would be the place for all Sioux nations to gather the stone for the pipe bowls.

The maiden placed the pipe in the chief's hands and left the lodge. The people watched her go. A short distance away she stopped, lay down on the ground and turned into a buffalo calf. As the people watched, she lay down again, rolled over, and arose as a White buffalo.

From this time, when a young man wanted to get extra power in a vision, he carried with him the sacred pipe, with its long stem made of wood that had been hollowed out in the center.

The pipe itself was such a religious symbol that the Buffalo People who smoked it to seal a promise of peace and friendship among themselves were called People of the Pipe.

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